

# 2002 Fire Chief

---

## Examination Orientation Guide



**Personnel**

James E. McGreevey, Governor  
Ida L. Castro, Commissioner

[www.state.nj.us/personnel](http://www.state.nj.us/personnel)

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

## **Fire Chief Orientation Guide**

INTRODUCTION .....	2
TEST DATE .....	2
DESCRIPTION OF TEST FORMAT .....	2
TEST CONTENT AREAS .....	3
READING/REFERENCE LIST .....	3
HELPFUL HINTS .....	4
EXAMINATION MAKE UP POLICY .....	5
TEST SECURITY AND CANDIDATE PLEDGE .....	5
POST EXAMINATION REVIEW POLICY .....	5
EXAMINATION CANCELLATION POLICY .....	6
STUDY GROUPS.....	6

## INTRODUCTION

This guide is written for prospective candidates for the promotional examination for Fire Chief. The information in this booklet will help candidates understand the testing process and answer some questions about examination preparation strategies.

## TEST DATE

Candidates, who have been admitted to the examination, will receive a Notification Card in the mail that shows the date, time, location and room for this test's administration.

The examination is tentatively scheduled for administration in late fall, 2002. Admitted candidates must bring the Notification Card, two forms of identification, two pencils, two pens and a highlighter to the Examination Center. One of the forms of identification must include a photograph. Map out a route in advance of the examination date and plan to arrive at the Examination Center early since no one will be admitted late. This Orientation Guide cannot be brought into the Examination Center.

## DESCRIPTION OF TEST FORMAT

An Assessment Center is an integrated system of exercises designed to generate behaviors similar to those required for success in a target job. These behaviors are measured in simulations that are similar to those activities performed in a given job. Each activity mirrors a different aspect of the job. Performance in these activities is observed by evaluators who are trained to be fair and objective. They compare participant's performance to predetermined performance guidelines to determine who will perform effectively in a particular job.

The New Jersey Department of Personnel, Division of Selection Services, uses a number of Assessment Center features in its Fire Chief Promotional Assessment process. This methodology is known to be a reliable and valid predictor of job success. For practical reasons, fire departments cannot promote everyone who is eligible for advancement and then see how they perform before making a final selection decision. The next best approach is to give eligible candidates a chance to try activities, which closely resemble the target job.

A distinct examination has been developed for the title, Fire Chief. The examination will consist of five scenario-based oral questions. Each scenario was developed from a task or set of tasks that incumbents or supervisors of incumbents deemed important to job performance.

## TEST CONTENT AREAS

The scenario-based oral exercises will cover five topic areas:

1. Fire Ground Operations Management
2. Supervision – Subordinate Incident/Interview
3. Supervision – Delegation and Performance Goals
4. Finance – Budget Preparation
5. Fire Department Administration

## READING/ REFERENCE LIST

The following reference list has been selected based on the input of incumbents:

1. The Fire Chief's Handbook, Bachtler, J.R.; Brennan, T.F., 5th edition, 1995. Saddle Brook, N.J.: Fire Engineering Books And Videos a Division of PennWell Publishing Company. (ISBN#: 0912212403)
2. Managing Fire Services, Coleman, R.J.; Granito, J.A.; ICMA Training Institute, 2nd edition, 1988. Washington, DC: International City/Council Management Association. (ISBN#: 0873260783)

***Only use the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Managing Fire Services in your preparation for this examination.***

***Please note that the Department of Personnel's intention is to use the reading/reference list on a limited basis in the development of the test. More specifically, the justification for the correct responses may be drawn from the reading/reference list but not exclusively. Justification may also be based on the collective Fire Service experience of Subject Matter Experts. When justification is based on experience, care will be taken to ensure that correct answers do not conflict with reference list material. **Although, the DOP suggests that candidates review the reading/reference list, your preparation for the examination should not be restricted to the above reading/reference list. Since the test items will require open-ended responses you will also have to rely on the application of knowledge and the application of management principles.*****

## HELPFUL HINTS

*Try Your Best* – The exercises are designed to be difficult. Perfection is not expected. Your overall evaluation is based on your performance on each exercise. Even if you feel as though you did poorly on one exercise, continue to try to do your best on the remaining exercises.

*The Exercises Are Set In A Hypothetical Fire Department* – This is done intentionally so as not to give an advantage to someone with a particular work background. Do not make assumptions about the hypothetical fire department or town. Take action and make decisions based only on the information that will be supplied in the exercise.

*Tricks and Techniques* - Some candidates believe that by learning a collection of tricks and techniques they can guarantee a better examination score. Candidates are coached on how to project a favorable façade (to smile, be courteous, wear certain clothes, et cetera). They may rely on this to hide deficiencies in performance. Some candidates are taught that certain exercises have specific “tricks” associated with them. These tricks may consist of anything from techniques for organizing information, to statements and actions that should be done to get better scores. Developing strategies for how to attack a problem is a good test taking technique, in that an organized approach is better than a disorganized approach or no approach at all. Predetermined strategies are fine as a starting point but cannot take the place of true problem-solving skills of the critical thinking that can be applied to changing circumstances and demands, either in simulation exercises or in real-world events.

“Tricks and techniques” will only take a candidate so far. Tricks and techniques are not part of the scoring criteria. More importantly, tricks and techniques are poor substitutes for developing skills in supervision and management areas.

The question of how to best prepare as a candidate basically comes down to one question: “Is your focus going to be the learning of tricks and techniques, or are you, the candidate, going to work on actively preparing yourself for the position being tested?” There appears to be no substitute for the hard work and persistence required to advance one’s skills and knowledge levels.

## EXAMINATION MAKE UP POLICY

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 4A: 4-2.9, makeup examinations for fire promotional examinations may be authorized only in cases of:

- Debilitating injury or illness requiring an extended convalescent period, provided the candidate submits a doctor's certification containing a diagnosis and a statement clearly showing that the candidate's physical condition precluded his or her participation in the examination;
- Death in the candidate's immediate family as evidenced by a copy of the death certificate; or
- A candidate's wedding which cannot be reasonably changed as evidenced by relevant documentation; or
- Error by the Department of Personnel or appointing authority.

If you require a make up examination please call the *Examination Make Up Unit* at (609) 292-9467 upon receipt of your Notification Card or supply the relevant documentation within 5 days after the examination date.

Please note that all requests for medical make up examinations must be accompanied by the Department of Personnel's Medical Authorization for Make Up Examination form completed by the treating physician. The Medical Authorization for Make Up Examination form can be obtained through the *Examination Make Up Unit*, or at the following web link: <http://www.state.nj.us/personnel/forms/dpf-728.pdf>.

## TEST SECURITY AND CANDIDATE PLEDGE

All candidates will be required to sign a pledge form at the examination center. The pledge will state that candidates will not discuss the content of this examination with any other person or study group, they understand the current examination will be administered over different days, and they will not discuss this examination with any previously processed candidate or potential make-up candidate prior to the examination. No one is permitted to make copies or notes during the administration of the examination.

## POST EXAMINATION REVIEW POLICY

A detailed review policy will be provided at the examination center. Subsequent to the date of the examination, candidates who participated in the oral assessment process will be provided the opportunity to review their examination scores upon receipt of an INELIGIBILITY/ELIGIBILITY NOTICE.

## **EXAMINATION CANCELLATION POLICY**

In the event that circumstances force cancellation of the examination administration, the Department of Personnel will attempt to contact your department head, as soon as that decision has been made. In the case of inclement weather, please call DOP's Information Center to find out the status of the examination or listen to your local radio station for further information. To contact the Department of Personnel's Information Center, call (609) 292-4144.

## **STUDY GROUPS**

The New Jersey Department of Personnel is not affiliated with any "study group" in the business of preparing individuals for examinations, nor does the Department of Personnel recommend participation in any "study group." Further, the Department of Personnel does not have authority to control or regulate the activity of "study groups." No "study group" has been involved in the development or review of Department of Personnel examinations and, at no time has any examination material been provided to such groups. Finally, the Department of Personnel is not responsible for any claims made by "study groups" or the manner in which they represent themselves for advertisement purposes.

We hope that this Orientation Guide has been beneficial to you.

Good Luck!